UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1992/NGO/9
17 June 1992

ENGLISH ONLY

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
1992 session

FOR INFORMATION

NGO STATEMENT BY LA LECHE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL

1. Breast-feeding saves lives. Protective factors present in human milk cannot be produced by artificial means. Studies undertaken by UNICEF in Latin America and the Caribbean showed that infants who were breast-fed for less than six months, or not breast-fed at all, were 6 to 14 times more likely to die in the second six months of life than those who were breast-fed for six months or more.

2. Breast-feeding is a global natural resource that should be protected. Breast-feeding saves energy and reduces pollution. Human milk is made by mothers in the exact quantities babies need, without stressing the environment by using the excess water, energy and tin containers that artificial feeding requires. Human milk is an unequalled complete food for the healthy growth of infants.

3. The act of breast-feeding converts the resources of the mother's body into optimal nourishment for her baby. It is a pivotal factor in child survival programmes and can save health care costs. It restores the mother's body to health by suppressing ovulation and menstruation, thereby conserving her iron reserve and protecting her from iron deficiency anaemia.

4. La Leche League International is committed to the breast-feeding goal set forth in the Innocenti Declaration and the World Summit Plan of Action: "Empowerment of all women to breast feed their children exclusively for four to six months and to continue breast feeding, with complementary food, well into the second year".

5. La Leche League International welcomes and fully supports the new joint UNICEF/World Health Organization baby-friendly hospital initiative and its objectives. It acknowledges the initiative as an important step forward in achieving the Innocenti Declaration and the Summit goals.

6. La Leche League International congratulates UNICEF on the way it has included a broad base of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in protecting, promoting and supporting breast-feeding. The continued strong support of UNICEF to such NGOs is essential to meet the goals set forth by the Innocenti Declaration.

7. La Leche League International recommends to the UNICEF Executive Board that:

(a) UNICEF commit increased resources for the publication and translation of materials, for the expansion of support to mothers, for training leaders and health care workers in breast-feeding management, and for primary and secondary education programmes. Education is the key to changing the bottle-feeding norm that prevails in most cultures. Breast-feeding as the natural, expected way of feeding infants is the message with which children need to grow up;

(b) UNICEF support the development of national codes of marketing of breast milk substitutes that are based on the International Code as a minimum standard. We encourage UNICEF to advocate national efforts to implement the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes;

(c) UNICEF continue to use the resources of La Leche League International in the protection, promotion and support of breast-feeding. Our counsellors can draw on the 35 years of experience of the parent organization, and have helped millions of mothers to breast-feed, especially in bottle-feeding cultures. There is at least one leader in each of 47 countries;

(d) UNICEF commit funds for the assessment of new areas of outreach and develop programmes that empower mothers to breast-feed in refugee or war-torn areas;

(e) UNICEF commit substantial funds to continue and expand the baby-friendly hospital initiative. Funds are needed at the same level as were committed for the immunization programme of the 1980s. The protection, promotion and support of breast-feeding needs ongoing funds to sustain new initiatives. The movement from a bottle-feeding culture to a breast-feeding culture is a long, continual effort. The health benefits to mother and child far outweigh the initial costs that are needed to set up and sustain breast-feeding initiatives;

(f) UNICEF encourage Governments to preserve and promote human milk as a global natural resource by supporting breast-feeding management programmes. Governments' recognition of the value of breast-feeding and the use of breast milk as a natural global resource can help to stop the downward trend in breast-feeding and ensure the conservation of this resource and other natural global resources.